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BOOKLET HONORS FATHER O'SULLIVAN

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA. – July 1, 2010 – One day after our country celebrates Independence Day, Mission San Juan Capistrano will honor the 100th anniversary of the arrival of Father St. John O'Sullivan. It was on July 5, 1910 that Father O'Sullivan came to the Capistrano Valley for treatment of tuberculosis, but he fell in love with the Mission and made it his mission to bring it back to life.

Jan Siegel, Volunteer Curator for the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society and an ardent volunteer at the Mission, has written a booklet that mirrors the booklet written by Father O'Sullivan himself 100 years ago. Siegel's booklet, *The Little Chapters About Father St. John O'Sullivan*, is available at the Mission book store now. Father O'Sullivan's booklet, *The Little Chapters About San Juan Capistrano*, was written to raise money for preservation of the Mission, and proceeds from Siegel's book will do the same, as well as support the San Juan Historical Society.

"He came here and saw the real heart of the Mission, even though it was in terrible shape," Siegel said. "He was enamored of Father Serra and his mission. But Father Serra's chapel was also a storage area that held wheat and barley and other things but he still preached there. It was mind-boggling to Father O'Sullivan so he decided to restore it."

Father O'Sullivan oversaw the conservation of Serra Chapel and the construction of the Mission Parish School, and he recognized that an admission fee could be charged to raise funds for conservation. He

established the Mission as one of the California's most religiously significant sites and carved out its place as a historical landmark. His legacy stands today in his accomplishments for the times.

He also co-authored a book entitled "Capistrano Nights," which related the folklore of San Juan. Included in the book was the story of how the Swallows returned every year.

"He was responsible for the Swallows getting attention," said Siegel, who added that O'Sullivan's birthday -- March 19 -- also happens to be the date the Swallows return every year.

One of Father O'Sullivan's first chores was to replace the old wooden fence that surrounded the Mission and replace it with a brick wall. People had taken bricks from the original structure, so Father O'Sullivan implored the public to return bricks.

"People brought them back and they rebuilt that wall one brick at a time," Siegel said. "If people needed food they came to him, and he said if you help build the wall I'll feed you. He was just an amazing, amazing individual and he completely fell in love with San Juan."

From July 5 to August 30, the Historical Society will present a photographic exhibit of Father O'Sullivan's impact on the Mission, which lasted from 1910 until his passing in 1933.

"The Mission is a historical treasure," Siegel in explaining why she wrote the booklet. "If not for Father O'Sullivan, I believe the Mission would not be around today."

About Mission San Juan Capistrano:

Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that boasts of quality permanent exhibits featuring original artifacts as well as traveling and temporary exhibits on a wide variety of topics.

The site itself serves as a living outdoor museum with original buildings constructed by Native Americans in the 18th century including the Serra Chapel, Great Stone Church, and the original padres' quarters of the South Wing.

The Mission was founded on November 1, 1776 by Padre Junipero Serra as the seventh in the chain of the twenty-one California missions established by Spain, and is Orange County's only mission. Every year, over 50,000 students visit the Mission and engage in an inspirational learning experience via the Mission Matters programming, as part of their State required California history studies.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and is supported by the Mission Preservation Foundation, which is comprised of business and community leaders committed to ensuring the long term preservation and viability of Orange County's only Mission. The Mission receives no funding from either the Church or the State of California and charges admission funds as a means of providing public access.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is located at 26801 Ortega Highway, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. Open Daily 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Good Friday afternoon. Admission is \$9 adults; \$8 seniors (60 years or over); \$5 children (ages 4 to 11); and children ages 3 and under are admitted free. Free audio guide with senior and adult admission. For more information, call (949) 234-1300 or visit www.missionsjc.com.

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